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# **Cannon Hall, No.14 Cannon Place Hampstead**

**A Heritage Appraisal of the Building and  
the Possible Impact of Proposals to  
Alter the Ground Floor Kitchen**

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# 1 Introduction

1.01 This report seeks to describe the historic Cannon Hall, detailing the heritage significance of the building and its site. The proposed works are described with design drawings being appended to the Listed Building Consent Application.

## 2 Designations

2.01 Cannon Hall is an important historic building in Hampstead. Its significance is recognised by inclusion within the designated Hampstead Conservation Area. It is also Listed Grade II Star as being of special architectural or historic interest and is noted as having group value with neighbouring buildings. The listing description reads;

*Cannon Hall*

*Grade II\**

*Detached mansion. Early C18 with later alterations and additions.*

*EXTERIOR:north front:brown brick with red brick dressings. Hipped pantiled roof with dormer. 2 storeys and attic. 6 windows (second to left blind) plus early C19 extension at east end and north addition (former coachman's house) and stable block with weather-boarded clock and bell-turret (now converted to a garage). C20 portico with pilasters supporting an entablature; panelled door with side lights. C20 passage along the front of the house. Segmental red brick arches and dressings to slightly recessed sash windows with exposed boxing. Red brick cornices and parapet. South (garden) front: 6 windows with early C19 addition at east end and 1 window, 2 storey, C18 addition at west end. Segmental red brick arches and dressings to slightly recessed sashes with exposed boxing; 2<sup>nd</sup> floor with projecting red brick surrounds and aprons. Red brick cornice and 1<sup>st</sup> floor band.*

*INTERIOR: not inspected but noted to retain some good panelling including bedrooms and back staircase. Some early C19 fireplaces in extension. Good early C20 staircase in mid C18 style with twisted balusters and carved brackets.*

*HISTORICAL NOTE: part of the stable block was once a magistrates' court dealing with prisoners in the Parish Lock-up, Cannon Lane (qv). Sir James Cosmo Melville, Secretary to the East India Company lived here during the C19 century; Sir Gerald du Maurier, actor-manager, from 1916-34 (GLC plaque)*

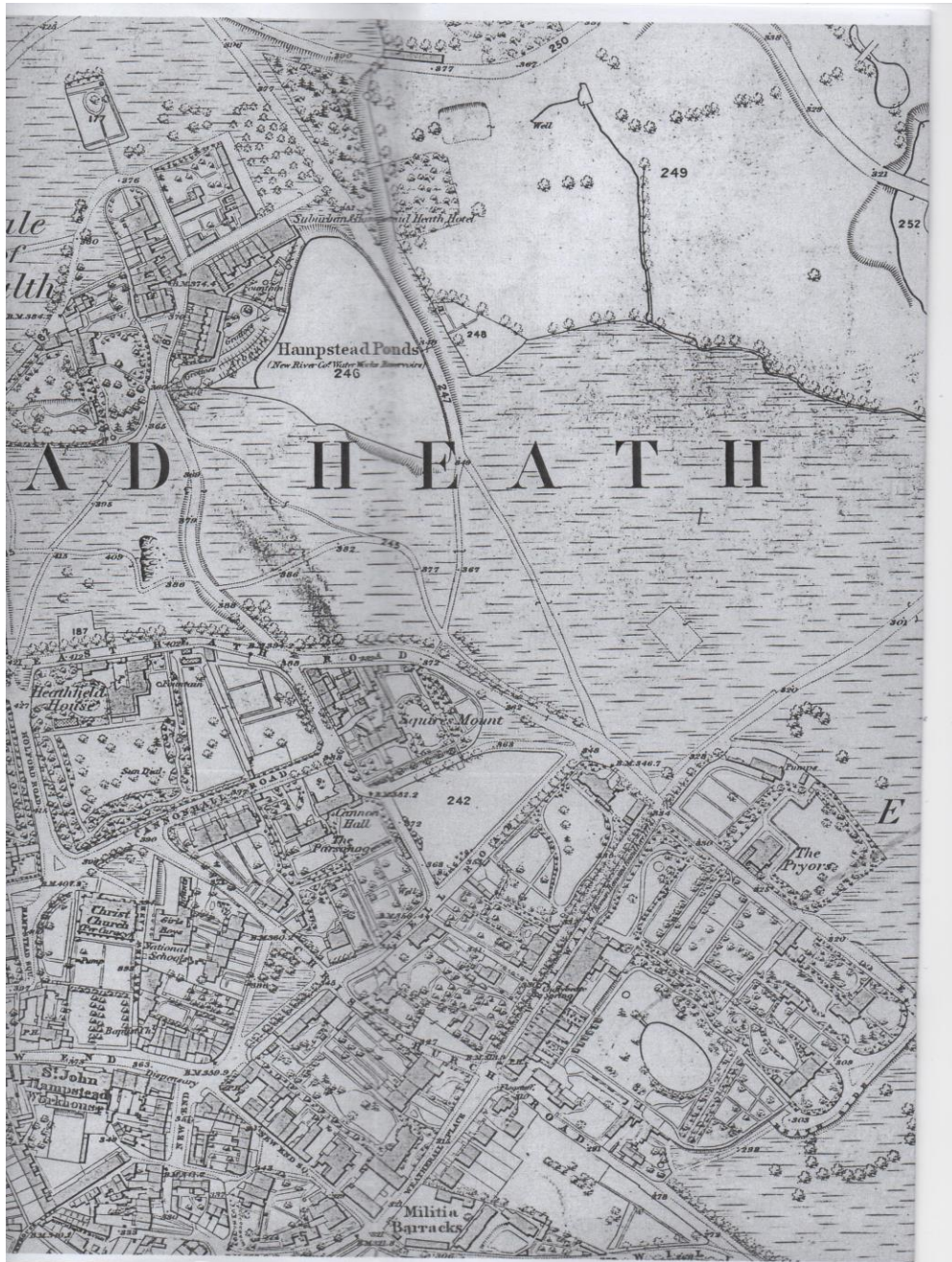
## 3 Heritage Significance

3.01 The heritage significance of Cannon Hall to the wider historic environment is recognised by its inclusion within the Hampstead Conservation Area. Intrinsically, the house is of high heritage significance as a Grade II Star Listed building, dating mostly from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, with later alterations and extensions, dating from the later 18<sup>th</sup> century as well as the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

3.02 This site was originally known as Rous's Buildings after John Rous, a lessee of the local Wells Estate. Rous's Buildings may have dated from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, before the existing early 18<sup>th</sup> century Cannon Hall. The site was also much larger than the present boundaries, extending to Well Road and Christchurch Hill, including three other houses. The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of the Ordnance Survey (1865) shows this larger plot as well as Cannon Hall much as it is today with the exception of the glass house on the south garden elevation which has been replaced by the current swimming pool enclosure along the eastern boundary and the loss of what was perhaps a wash house from the south western corner.

3.03 The main part of Cannon Hall was built circa 1730. The house was leased to a widow, Sarah Holford from about 1745. One of the earliest inhabitants from 1780 was Sir Noah Thomas (1720-1792), who was Physician-in Ordinary to George III. In 1838, the house was occupied by Sir James Cosmo Melvill (1792-1861), the last secretary to the East India Company. He reputedly named the house Cannon Hall after the cast iron cannon he placed in the garden, which are

still in position. The 1841 census shows Sir James, his wife, six daughters, two sons and four servants in residence. By 1850, the Melvill family had moved to Tandridge Court in Surrey.



1<sup>st</sup> Edition O.S. 1865

3.04 The Hampstead parish Lock-Up is built into the eastern garden wall of the southern part of the site no longer within the ownership of Cannon Hall. It was used to detain prisoners before their appearance in front of the local magistrates. It fell into disuse with the foundation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829. James Marshall was a local magistrate who lived at Cannon Hall by 1870 and who converted the room next to the stable on the north side of the house into a magistrate's court room.

3.05 In 1916, the actor and manager Sir Gerald du Maurier (1873-1934) bought Cannon Hall and lived here till his death . His wife Muriel Beaumont was a noted actress. They had three daughters; Daphne, Angela and Jeanne. Daphne became the most famous as the author of novels such as "Rebecca" and "Jamaica Inn".

3.06 The original central section of Cannon Hall is the six-window wide two storey house of early 18<sup>th</sup> century date. Although the windows on both the north (entrance) and south (garden) elevations retain their original exposed sash boxes and semi-flush windows, most of the sashes are of later 18<sup>th</sup> century date and some are more modern replacements. Internally, many windows have panelled shutter boxes with astragal mouldings typical of the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. This central section of the house is of particular heritage significance.

3.07 At the west end of the main house is a 19<sup>th</sup> century service wing, of lesser heritage significance but still designed in a well-mannered brick idiom. This continues as a single storey service block on the west side of the north entrance yard. At the east end is a more substantial early and middle 19<sup>th</sup> century full height extension built in plainer brick to the original house. This extension continues from the garden front to the north yard where there is a 19<sup>th</sup> century magistrate's courtroom, some guest accommodation and a coach house/stable building. These service buildings to the east and west of the main house contribute to the overall character of the site but are of subsidiary significance to the main house. As the magistrate's courtroom is of social historical importance, this feature of the house is of particular heritage significance.

3.08 There is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century single storey conservatory lobby on the north elevation which provides a covered way from the entrance hall to the magistrate's courtroom (which latterly was used as a billiard room.) This addition adds to the mixed and varied character of the entrance elevation and is of subsidiary heritage significance.

3.09 There are also a substantial swimming pool enclosure in the garden and a south conservatory added to the kitchen elevation. Both of these structures are modern and of little heritage significance.

3.10 The major feature of the ground floor interior is the grand oak cantilevered staircase that rises to a first floor gallery. Despite the impressive craftsmanship and gracious dimension of the staircase designed in a middle 18<sup>th</sup> century style, this is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century addition and is somewhat out of scale with the early 18<sup>th</sup> century house. Nevertheless, this later insertion of high quality craftsmanship is of heritage significance. Some areas of raised and fielded panelling and doors remain from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The dining room to the east now has 20<sup>th</sup> century varnished pine panelling designed in a middle 18<sup>th</sup> century style.

3.11 The kitchen, breakfast room and the utility areas at the west end of the house all now have plain modern finishes.

3.12 The first floor landing is spacious and gives access to a drawing room to the east formed, possibly in 20<sup>th</sup> century, by knocking together two rooms which have later 18<sup>th</sup> century details. The high quality 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century chimney pieces found throughout the house appear to be have been fitted later, as is the parquet flooring. The bedroom and bathroom to the east, (over the magistrate's courtroom) have been refitted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is of low heritage significance. There are a number of second floor rooms within the original house with 18<sup>th</sup> century painted timber panelling.

3.13 The third floor or roof storey has for many years been laid out as mostly a single open space, lit by a dormer window and some small roof lights.

## 4 The Proposals

4.01 KITCHEN/DINING ROOM (Drawing CH/1, 2 and 2A). This room is the family heart of the house and the proposal is to improve the working space in the kitchen, leaving the garden end of the room unaltered for breakfast and dining. The utility room to the west of the kitchen is underused and of little use as additional kitchen space.

4.02 It is proposed to enlarge the existing door opening to bring some of the utility space into the kitchen. The wall concerned already has the doorway opening and the relatively short area of wall is altered and repaired as well as being covered in modern plasterboard. Services have been cut into the wall and there are areas of poor quality “making good” with hard cement mortar and fletton common bricks. The substantial area of complete wall between the dining area and the rear utility room would remain intact. Relocating the island unit will improve the dining space.

4.03 Removing a much greater extent of this wall and incorporating more of the utility into the kitchen/dining room would have resulted in a more spacious family space. But this would have involved a damaging level of historic fabric loss through more wall demolition. The proposed limited removal of an altered area of wall will have a maximum effect in improving the kitchen space with the minimum loss of historic fabric.

## 5 Conclusion

5.01 The proposals are modest and carefully considered so as to not needlessly destroy important historic fabric or interfere with the special character of this Grade II Star house. The proposals will

make the house more conducive to modern family life. At pre-application consultation for this proposal, the local authority expressed concern regarding the loss of original fabric that would result in the removal of the section of wall between the kitchen and the utility room. However, the applicant considers that as this minor section of wall is adjacent to an existing doorway and involves the removal of an already damaged area of brickwork. The improvement in usability of the kitchen outweighs the relatively small loss of altered historic fabric. The sense of historic compartmentation between the kitchen and utility room would remain intact.